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Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

13 July 1984

USSR-JORDAN: Closer Military Ties

Summary

Increased Soviet-Jordanian contacts since last March underscore King Hussein's frustration with US policy in the Middle East, particularly US reluctance to fulfill his military needs. He is not interested in altering Jordan's basic political orientation or military supply relationship and would prefer to "buy American," but believes he must show Washington that Jordan cannot be taken for granted. The Soviets view Hussein's discontent as an opportunity for arms sales, improved bilateral relations, and increased influence in the region. The two sides probably will conclude an arms deal for Soviet air defense weapons and other military equipment this year.

[redacted]

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Jordan Seeks Soviet Military Equipment

The apparent improvement in Soviet-Jordanian relations is the direct result of the tensions that have developed between Amman and Washington during the last year. King Hussein has publicly [redacted] indicated increasing frustration over what he perceives to be a one-sided policy that consistently favors Israel. He views the US-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement and congressional opposition to US arms sales to Jordan as confirming that perception. [redacted]

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This Memorandum was prepared by the Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, and by the Third World Division, Office of Soviet Analysis. Information as of 13 July 1984 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division [redacted]

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US Embassy officials say the King believes Washington is pressing him to make decisions on the peace process but is unwilling to provide him with the means to protect his country against Arab adversaries who oppose such decisions. He also believes Washington would not press Israel for concessions in negotiations and, thus, judges he has little to lose by improving relations with Moscow. [REDACTED]

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Hussein probably wants to obtain Soviet air defense equipment primarily to demonstrate his independence from the United States. In our view, this consideration prompted him to conclude the 1981 arms agreement with the Soviets for a small number of SA-8 anti-aircraft missiles and ZSU-23/4 anti-aircraft artillery guns. He probably also hopes that the mere appearance of Jordanian willingness to "buy Soviet" will soften US conditions on future arms sales to Jordan. [REDACTED]

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Hussein's urgency to purchase Soviet military equipment apparently is heightened by growing concern [REDACTED] about Jordan's inadequate air defenses. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] increasing Jordanian impatience with Israeli violations of Jordanian airspace. The Jordanians would like to have the ability to deter these intrusions if they choose. The Jordanians also worry about future Syrian military activities along their common border. [REDACTED]

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Jordanian military officials strongly prefer US military equipment and support, but they currently see little alternative to pursuing their discussions with the Soviets.* Jordan probably will be most interested in obtaining the shoulder-fired SA-14, a surface-to-air missile similar to the US-made Stinger. In addition to this SAM, the Jordanians probably will be interested in acquiring a mobile, vehicle-mounted air defense system such as the SA-9 or its replacement, the SA-13.** [REDACTED]

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The Soviet Angle

The Soviet Ambassador in Amman told a US official in April that Moscow would consider seriously any Jordanian request for military equipment. The Soviets are likely to offer generous terms with long repayment schedules for future arms sales. [REDACTED]

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*Jordanian officials have been dissatisfied with the quality of some Soviet equipment and support. [REDACTED]

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**The SA-13 is replacing the SA-9 in the Soviet Union and is similar to the US-made Chaparral. It has been observed to date only in East Germany, Afghanistan, and, perhaps, Algeria. It is mounted on a tracked chassis and, compared with the SA-9, has a longer range and improved low-altitude capabilities. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets have not yet exported the SA-14 and probably would be hesitant to risk its compromise by allowing Jordan to be the first recipient. Rather, they probably will offer the SA-7B, a shoulder-fired system with slightly better capabilities than Jordan's older US-made REDEYES. SA-7 missiles are common in the Middle East--even among some Lebanese militias--and the Soviets would be eager to sell them and the widely exported SA-9. The Soviets might consider providing the SA-13, which may already have been sold to Algeria, if they perceive that its sale would give them a firmer foothold in Jordan. [REDACTED]

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Moscow probably would supply the SA-3 system which has been widely exported. The Jordanians, however, probably will not be as interested in the SA-3 as they are in the shoulder-fired or mobile systems. The SA-3 is an older system, fired from fixed launchers, and probably would require extensive Soviet support. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets would be willing to provide Jordan with advanced fighter aircraft, but we do not believe the Jordanians are interested. Their first priority is to acquire reliable ground-based air defenses. Conversion to Soviet fighters, moreover, would require a closer military association with the Soviet Union than the Jordanians probably want. Moscow, moreover, is unlikely to provide fully equipped advanced fighters, which have the USSR's most advanced radars and avionics, for fear that these new systems could end up in US hands. [REDACTED]

Moscow which has long sought closer ties with Amman, is intensifying its efforts in the wake of the King's criticism of the United States. The Soviets probably hope that improved relations will convince Jordan not to support the 1982 US peace initiative or any other Arab-Israeli peace plan unless it provides for a Soviet role in negotiations. They probably believe that better bilateral ties with Jordan also would help the USSR expand its regional contacts and influence beyond radical Arab states. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets will urge a visit to Moscow by the King or senior Jordanian officials as a visible sign of their improved relations. Moscow probably will underscore the need for Arab unity to achieve an Arab-Israeli peace and might encourage Jordan and Syria to improve relations to accomplish this. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets will weigh the benefits of improved ties with Jordan against the potential impact on Soviet-Syrian relations. Moscow probably calculates that Syrian dependence on Soviet military equipment will limit any Syrian reaction to a modest Soviet-Jordanian arms deal. [REDACTED]

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Outlook and Implications for the United States

Jordan probably will conclude an arms agreement with the Soviets before the end of the year. The US Embassy in Amman has transmitted unconfirmed reports that the King or his Commander in Chief Bin Shakir will go to Moscow soon. [REDACTED]

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A number of factors will influence how far Hussein will go to improve relations. Chief among these will be Hussein's judgment about the prospects for renewing peace efforts after the Israeli and US elections. Nevertheless, he probably will conclude an arms deal regardless of their outcomes. [REDACTED]

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Hussein wants to avoid extensive Soviet follow-on support. He previously restricted the number of Soviets who accompanied the first arms purchase to 30 advisers. [REDACTED]

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Thus the King may allow additional Soviets in Jordan to accompany new equipment but will continue to limit the number [REDACTED]

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Hussein certainly wants to maintain his ties with the United States. He attaches great importance to the benefits of continued diplomatic and military cooperation. Moreover, he probably believes few, if any, other countries would be willing to replace the United States as his principal benefactor at an acceptable political price. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: USSR-JORDAN: Closer Military Ties

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